



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: April 1 to June 30, 2005

**BURKINA FASO: STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00 (04852)**

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I. SUMMARY

A number of events related to Burkina Faso's upcoming presidential elections, scheduled for November of 2005, have raised political tensions during this quarter. The government's unilateral inversion of the electoral calendar and the resulting friction between the National Independent Election Commission (CENI) and opposition parties, the internal pressures faced by parties and coalitions in selecting presidential candidates, and the controversial acceptance by current President Blaise Compaore of his party's nomination, have created an uncertain and turbulent political environment ahead of the presidential polls.

During this quarter, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) continued its program to strengthen political parties and promote inter-party dialogue. The objectives of NDI's program are to build the capacity of political party leaders to communicate more effectively with the electorate and to help improve the quality of inter-party dialogue for increased cooperation and coalition-building initiatives.

Key program activities this quarter included a forum on the electoral calendar and management of electoral lists, and the Institute's second local message development training in Bobo Dioulasso. The Institute's multiparty technical committee also met regularly during April and May to compile a terms of reference for the forum, and to continue to discuss how these groups could work together in the lead up to the polls. NDI continued to target its assistance to the four main groups of parties in Burkina Faso – the *Mouvance Presidentielle*, Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Fédération - Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (ADF-RDA), the Opposition Burkinabè Unie (OBU), and the R-17 (or Alternance 2005).

NDI's current grant is scheduled to end on July 31, 2005, although the Institute anticipates receiving additional funding to continue its work with political parties. During the month of July, NDI will continue to hold individual meetings with parties and party groupings to evaluate the Institute's program to date, and to determine how to best to structure future multi-party dialogue activities, including meetings of the technical committee, in light of recent changes in Burkina Faso's political landscape.

II. BACKGROUND

Preparations for the November presidential elections have overshadowed all other recent political developments, leading to a plethora of party meetings and conventions to mobilize for the polls and nominate candidates.

The ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) party held several forums throughout the quarter to address the roles of youth, women and the elderly in 2005 and 2006 elections. Throughout the quarter, more and more associations called on President Compaore to present himself as a presidential candidate. On June 18, he officially accepted the CDP's nomination. His candidacy raises a serious constitutional question, since Article 37 of the Constitution limits the President of Burkina Faso to two five-year terms. President Compaore's supporters claim he is eligible and that Compaore's two seven-year terms do not count toward the limit. Groups such as the Collective for the Defense of the Constitution (CODECO), however, called on the president to not present himself in presidential elections, having already served two terms.

Opposition groups also mobilized for upcoming elections, though significant challenges to internal cohesion became apparent for some parties and party groupings. The most serious of these occurred at the end of the quarter, when the ADF/RDA, officially the largest opposition party in Burkina Faso and the party from whom the legislature's "opposition leader" is drawn, announced that it would not field a candidate the election, but would instead support Compaore. Press reports indicated the decision created controversy within the party, with a number of party members advocating for a separate candidate.

Disagreement between Laurent Bado and Emile Pare, leaders of parties within the United Burkinabe Opposition coalition and rival presidential candidates (Bado received his nomination shortly after the reporting period), also raised tensions within that coalition, which eventually contributed to its rupture. Bado, whose admitted acceptance of 30 million FCFA (approximately \$60,000 USD) from Compaore has led to allegations of corruption, was formerly considered a radical member of the opposition.

Despite internal party struggles, the number of presidential candidates continued to grow. Ali Lankoande of the Party for Democracy and Progress/Socialist Party (PDP/PS) was named candidate of the Alternance 2005 coalition, bringing the total number of presidential candidates to thirteen.

Meanwhile, the government proceeded to put in place mechanisms for the upcoming elections. A month-long voter registration process ended on May 25. However, opposition parties continued to question the independence of the CENI, particularly following the governments' unilateral decision last quarter to postpone local elections and hold the presidential polls first. In an effort to promote dialogue, the CENI organized a meeting with political parties to discuss the revision of the electoral lists. The National Assembly, in collaboration with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, also continued to lay the new legal framework for Burkina Faso's decentralization process, which aims to increase the participation of citizens in local government and development.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Forum on the Electoral Calendar and Management of Electoral Lists

NDI, in coordination with the technical committee, organized a two-day forum from April 8 to 9 on, “The Republican Calendar and Management of Electoral Lists: Constraints and Stakes for the Consolidation of Democracy in Burkina Faso.” The meeting brought together approximately 40 representatives from all four of the coalitions participating in NDI’s program, representatives from civil society, and officials from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and the CENI. The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To review the CENI’s tasks related to the organization of the Presidential and local polls and to discuss the calendar for their implementation;
- To analyze the problems and constraints created by delays in the execution of electoral tasks;
- To identify opportunities and possible corrective measures;
- To discuss the stakes and possible consequences of the inversion of the electoral calendar; and
- To formulate appropriate recommendations for a broad range of actors in Burkina Faso’s electoral process.

The opening ceremony was presided over by M. Moumouni Fabre, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization; Anthony Holmes, United States Ambassador to Burkina Faso; and NDI Resident Representative Aminata Kasse. During the opening statements, Mme. Kasse set the tone by emphasizing that understanding between different political actors was a vital ingredient to the taking root of democracy. Ambassador Holmes encouraged parties to “debate freely the questions of common interest,” and to agree on the electoral calendar and the modalities of organizing the next election in order to avoid “complaints and useless contestations.” M. Fabre emphasized the government’s dedication to the coming electoral elections, and the importance of the elections proceeding as planned.

Two discussion sessions followed: “The order of the elections and the arrangement of electoral calendars in Burkina Faso from 1991 to Present: Legal Foundations, Stakes, Risks, and Perspectives for the Consolidation of Democracy;” and “Technical Requirements and the Tasks of Organizing the next Presidential and Local Elections.”

Session I

Dr. Luc Marius Ibriga, professor of Political and Legal Science at the University of Ouagadougou, opened the first session with a presentation on the political history and legal framework of elections in Burkina Faso. Dr. Ibriga emphasized that the legislative elections of 2002 were one of the first polls to include consensual electoral mechanisms. He also noted an “instability” with respect to the legal texts guiding elections in Burkina Faso: the electoral code currently in effect is the ninth such code for the country. Dr. Ibriga also discussed the process of

compiling electoral lists, challenges related to political party and campaign finance, and the postponement of the local elections.

The floor was then opened for debate. Participants identified a deficit in dialogue between the ruling and opposition party with respect to the electoral process, and focused their debate on how to capitalize on past experiences to improve future electoral processes. Many of these interventions were incorporated into recommendations formulated at the end of the forum.

Session II

CENI President Moussa Michel Tapsoba opened the second discussion session by updating participants on the CENI's efforts to fulfill its mission, beginning with the recently concluded electoral registration process. Mr. Tapsoba assured parties of the integrity of the database used by the CENI to organize registration information, explaining briefly how the commission input new names and corrected old records from the 2002 lists. With respect to the postponement of the local elections, Mr. Tapsoba told parties that all the necessary steps had been taken to hold the municipal elections in May of 2005 as planned, but that a lack of resources forced the postponement.

Participants took advantage of this candid presentation to raise additional issues of concern related to electoral process, including:

- The lack of consultation between the CENI and other stakeholders to jointly address challenges;
- Difficulties in correcting the electoral lists, including the removal of deceased voters;
- Access to the electoral registration list by electoral actors;
- The relationship between the CENI and the government;
- The feasibility of holding presidential and local elections at the same time; and
- The impact of the postponement of the municipal elections until after the presidential polls

Following the two discussion sessions, political parties and civil society participants formulated a series of recommendations for Burkina's political actors. A summary of these recommendations is included as Appendix A of this report. Recommendations received wide press coverage, and were distributed to a wide range of authorities and political actors in the electoral process.

Message Development Training in Bobo Dioulasso

NDI held its second message development training for political party representatives at the local level in Bobo Dioulasso from April 14 to 16, 2005. The workshop was designed to: 1) equip local political party leaders with techniques and skills for developing political messages, particularly within the pre- and post-electoral context; 2) offer an opportunity for interparty dialogue and collaboration; 3) facilitate exchanges between political parties and civil society on issues of citizen concern related to local development; and 4) provide targeted assistance to political coalitions in adapting their political messages to citizen expectations and concerns.

Mme. Kasse facilitated the training, and NDI Program Officer Dany Ayida moderated subsequent discussion sessions.

Twenty-seven political party leaders from Bobo Dioulasso and the surrounding areas, including representatives from three of the four coalitions participating in NDI's program, participated in the training. The ruling party's coalition was not able to attend the training. The opening session was also attended by representation from the Governor, the Mayor of the Commune of Bob-Dioulasso and the Secretary General of the province of Houet.

In opening training session, Mme. Kasse emphasized that, "The political message is what allows the politician to obtain his objective: to be elected, or to have his or her candidate elected." Mme. Kasse stressed the importance of ensuring that the message is well-received, and provided recommendations on how to develop a convincing and complete message. The training addressed questions such as, "What are the attitudes to adopt towards the populations?", "Whom is it necessary to address, and at what moment?", and "Who are the adversaries?"

Trainings covered different steps of developing a political message, in particular, the importance of: 1) Researching the necessary information; 2) Setting a goal; and 3) Targeting the electorate. A question and answer period followed the session.

Working Groups on Message Development

Following the presentation, participants broke into working groups to practice message development techniques. Each group contained at least one representative from each of the participating coalitions. Using a "working document" that reiterated the techniques of message development, the groups developed a hypothetical campaign message. In presenting their completed messages, the groups demonstrated a strong understanding of the concepts and skills presented earlier in the day.



Debates between Parties and Civil Society

Approximately 50 civil society leaders from Bobo Dioulasso participated in a working session on the second day of the training. The *Centre Africa Obota* and the *Coalition Burkinabe des Droits de Femme* facilitated a discussion intended to address expectations of the population of Bobo-Dioulasso regarding political parties and local development. Participating civil society organizations included: the *Organisation des Personnes Défavorisées*, *Citoyen du Monde*, *Association des Personnes Handicapées*, *Collectif des Organisations de la Société Civile du Houet (Bobo Dioulasso province)*, and the *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Démocratie et le Développement (GERDDES)*.

Participants raised concerns regarding poverty, insecurity, health fees for students, the lack of adequate public services in the city, the inaccessibility of information and lack of public provisions for handicapped persons, unemployment, and a lack of transparency of the

management of public funds. In response, political party representatives acknowledged the problems, but argued that civil society was not itself contributing enough to the development of the province.

At the end of the discussion, parties strongly recommended the creation of a permanent consultative framework to facilitate further dialogue between political parties and civil society. The media present at the workshop also asked to attend political party meetings, and certain media asked that a “catalogue” of political parties be put at the disposition of the public, distributed through the town halls and high commissions.

Follow-up Technical Assistance

During the third day of the training, NDI met individually with each of the party groupings in attendance. During the meetings, coalitions cited many internal challenges related to a lack of communication between the local and national party levels, insufficient resources, and the lack of training and preparation for elections. Party groupings also used these meetings to highlight their views on other issues and challenges tied to the democratic process, such as the necessity of a code of conduct for political parties, transparency in the management of local elections, the marginalization of the opposition by the populations and the ruling party, and the financial weakness of opposition parties.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective 1: Build the capacity of political party leaders to communicate more effectively with the electorate

- Twenty-seven local political party leaders from Bobo Dioulasso participated in the Institute’s April message development training. During multi-party working groups, parties demonstrated a strong understanding of the presented concepts while participating in an exercise to develop a hypothetical campaign message.
- Party leaders participated in a discussion with approximately fifty civil society representatives during the message development training, to identify and discuss primary issues of concern for the local population. During subsequent consultations, parties noted they had gained valuation information on a range of citizen concerns.

Objective 2: Help improve the quality of inter-party dialogue for increased cooperation and coalition-building initiatives.

- Party representatives participating in the roundtable on the electoral calendar and registration process identified common concerns and highlighted these to the President of the CENI.
- During the April roundtable, parties worked together with civil society participants to develop a list of recommendations to Burkina Faso’s political actors for the improvement

of Burkina Faso's electoral process that was widely publicized in the media and distributed to key actors in Burkina Faso's political process.

- During the message development training, parties recommended the creation of a permanent consultative framework to facilitate further dialogue between political parties and civil society on issues of local development in Bobo Dioulasso.
- Despite growing tensions in the pre-electoral period, NDI's multi-party technical committee met four times during the quarter to discuss issues of common concern and to identify ways of working together in the pre-election period.

V. EVALUATION

Forum on the Electoral Calendar and Management of Electoral Lists

Following recent spirited and sometimes difficult public exchanges between the president of the CENI and opposition parties, NDI staff was prepared for the forum on the electoral calendar and registration to be highly contentious. NDI knew that the opposition initially viewed the roundtable as an opportunity to pressure the government to revisit its decision to reverse the electoral calendar. However, NDI also believed that the government's decision was likely irrevocable. For this reason, the Institute encouraged participants to focus their dialogue on recommendations for the future, and to also address technical aspects for the upcoming polls.

Dialogue between political parties and the CENI during the roundtable was surprisingly frank and fruitful, due in part to the open attitude of CENI President Tapsoba. During the dialogue, Tapsoba shared his perception that parties expressed little interest in the work of the CENI, stating that, "The CENI feels orphaned, abandoned by the parties, even while it works for them." The meeting also provided a forum for the parties to express their view that the CENI does not consult them. The comprehensive list of recommendations produced at the close of the meeting represented a strong effort by parties and civil society to work together, and illustrated the constructive nature of the preceding dialogue.

Message Development Training

Consultations during NDI's message development training revealed difficulties experienced by all party groupings tied to the functioning of coalitions at the local level, including a lack of coordination of activities and circulation of information between the national and local party branches. Most coalitions expressed a desire for additional support from NDI in the form of trainings, and a hope that NDI activities would be covered more by the media so that they would be more visible.

Participants in NDI's message development training in Bobo Dioulasso noted the event provided a first opportunity for targeted dialogue between political parties and Bobo Dioulasso's vibrant civil society. The participants' recommendation to put in place a "consultative framework" on local development at the end of the workshop demonstrated a desire on the part

of Bobo Dioulasso's political actors for continued discussion and collaboration to address local problems.

Technical Committee

During the months of April and May, NDI's multiparty technical committee met every 15 days to establish the terms of reference for the roundtable on the electoral calendar and voter registration, and to continue to identify areas for future dialogue. Discussions during this period remained open and constructive, and parties were able to unanimously adopt the terms of reference for the April roundtable despite a somewhat critical analysis of Burkina Faso's political context.

However, during May, an absence of representation from the presidential movement at meetings due to preparations for the ruling party Congress, as well as the internal problems brewing within the OBU, prevented meetings from being representative enough to make decisions. During the month of June, therefore, NDI instead held individual sessions with the different coalitions, with the goal of evaluating how best to proceed with the structuring of the technical committee dialogue in light of Burkina Faso's evolving political landscape.

Upcoming presidential elections will only serve to increase tensions between parties and within coalitions; the rupturing of the OBU coalition, as well as the controversial decision by the ADF-RDA to support the candidacy of President Blaise Compaore, further demonstrate the absolute necessity for continued inter-party dialogue in the pre-election period. This dialogue can help encourage a peaceful and credible electoral process, and the continuation of the development of Burkina Faso's fragile democratic process.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI's current grant is scheduled to end on July 31, 2005, although the Institute anticipates receiving additional funding from USAID to continue its work to promote inter-party dialogue and build the capacity of political party leaders to communicate more effectively with the electorate. During the month of July, NDI will continue to hold individual meetings with parties and party groupings to evaluate the Institute's program to date, and to determine how to best to structure future multi-party dialogue activities, including meetings of the technical committee, in light of the rapidly changing political environment in the lead-up to Presidential elections.

Appendix A

Summary of Recommendations by Political Parties and Civil Society Actors Forum on the Electoral Calendar and Management of Electoral Lists April 2005

(Translation)

To the Government

- Hold the next local and presidential elections together.
- Organize regular consultations with political parties and civil society on questions of major interest.
- Take appropriate measures to provide to each Burkinabe citizen of voting age a secure identity card that can serve in the future as an identification document for voter registration.
- Encourage and facilitate the observation of elections by national and international organizations to contribute to the credibility of voting processes.
- Enact and put at the disposition of the CENI the financial resources necessary to perform its duties.

To the CENI

- Improve consultations with partners in the electoral process, including parties and civil society, to keep them informed of preparations and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the electoral calendar.

To the Political Parties

- Show more interest in the work of the CENI, and inform the CENI of party activities.
- Train, sensitize and inform citizens on the electoral and decentralization processes.
- Organize periodic inter-party consultations on questions of common interest.
- Participate fully in all steps in the electoral process.

To Civil Society Organizations

- Participate fully in the electoral and decentralization process.
- Initiate actions and targeted programs for independent election observation and for the sensitization of the population.

To the Population of Burkina Faso

- Participate actively in the electoral process.